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DCFS
Illinois Department of Children & Family Services

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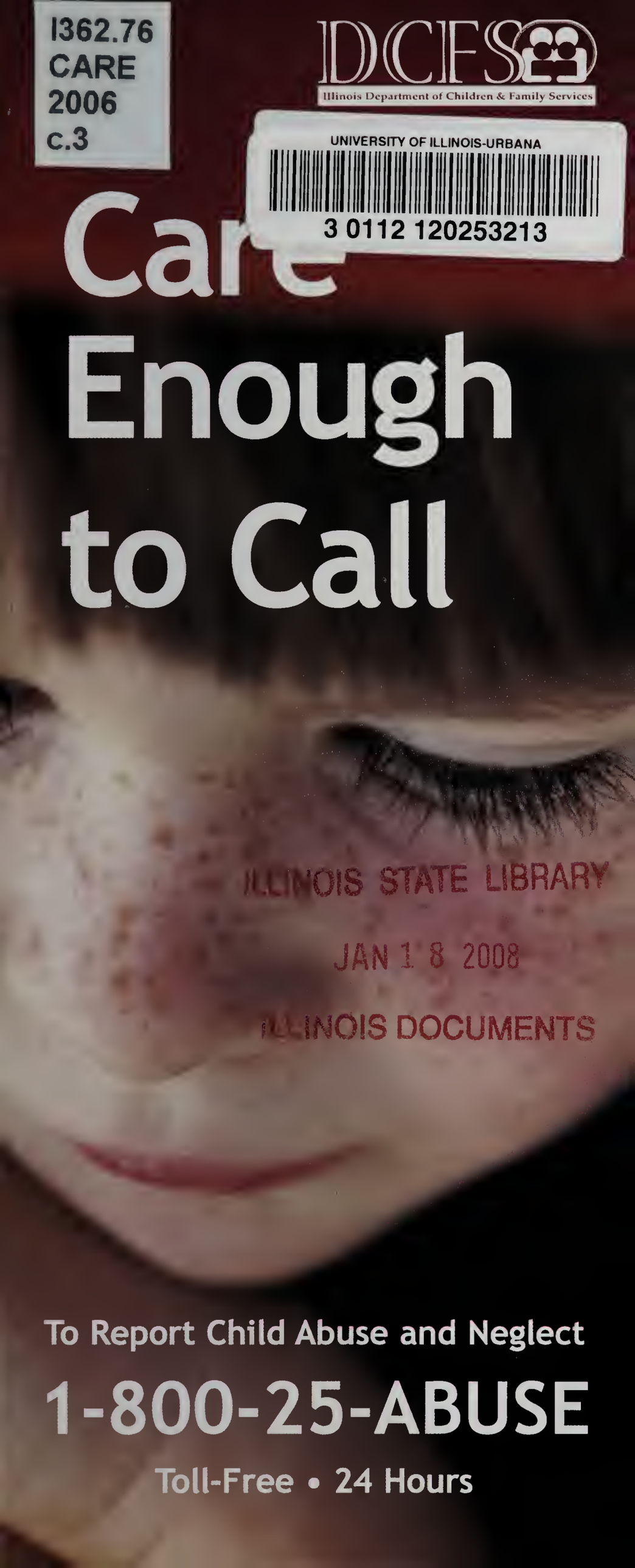
Care Enough to Call



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To Report Child Abuse and Neglect

1-800-25-ABUSE

Toll-Free • 24 Hours

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Care Enough to Call

Protecting children is a responsibility we all share. It is important for every person to take child abuse and neglect seriously, to be able to recognize when it happens, and to know what to do next. Care enough to call the state's child abuse hotline:

1-800-25-ABUSE
(1-800-252-2873 in Illinois)
1-800-358-5117 (TTY)
217-524-2606 (if calling from outside of Illinois)

What are child abuse and neglect?

This year hotline workers will handle approximately 70,000 reports of child abuse and neglect. Child abuse is the mistreatment of a child under the age of 18 by a parent, caretaker, someone living in their home or someone who works with or around children. The mistreatment must cause injury or harm, or put the child at risk of injury or harm. Child abuse can be physical (such as bruises, burns or broken bones), sexual (such as fondling, penetration, exposure to pornography, or incest) or emotional.

Neglect happens when a parent or responsible caretaker fails to provide adequate supervision, food, clothing, shelter, medical care or other basics for a child.

When should I call the hotline?

You should call the child abuse hotline whenever you believe that a person who is caring for the child, who lives with the child, or who works with or around children may

have caused injury or harm or put the child at risk of injury or harm as defined in the Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.

Some examples of situations in which you should call the hotline include:

- If you see someone beating a child or hitting a child with an object.
- If you see marks on a child's body that do not appear to have been caused by accident.
- If a child tells you that he or she has been harmed by someone.
- If a child appears to be undernourished, is dressed inappropriately for the weather, or is young and has been left alone.

Use your own judgment and call the hotline whenever you think a child may have been abused or neglected.

When should I NOT call the hotline?

Some situations do not require calling the hotline. Use good judgment. Call only when you think a child may have been or will be injured or harmed as described above. Some examples of when you should **not** call the hotline include:

- Situations where a child is causing a problem that concerns you, but the problem is not related to abuse or neglect. In some cases you may wish to call law enforcement or talk to the child's parents or relatives.
- Domestic situations where family stress is evident, but the child has not been abused or put at risk of abuse. Community service agencies are often available to help.

- If you're seeking information about DCFS or its programs, the Division of Communications is available to answer questions. Call 217-785-1700, or you may call your local DCFS office.

What should I report?

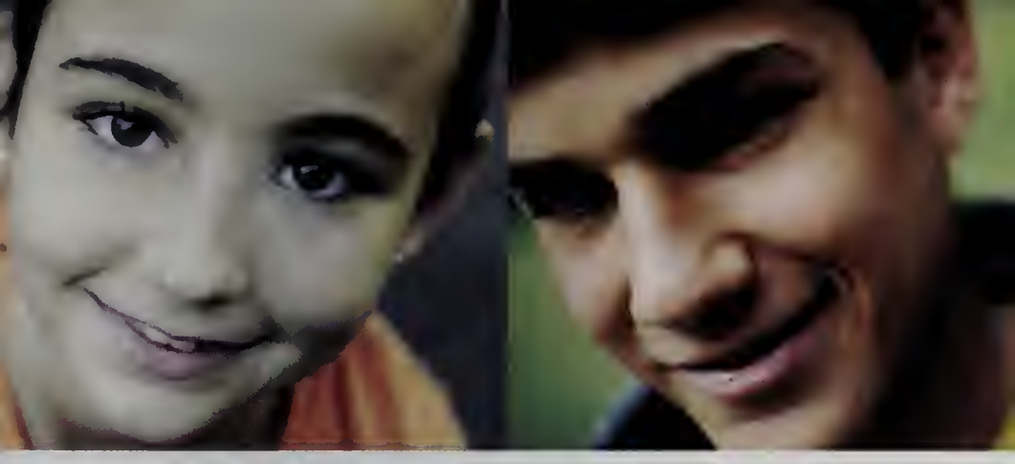
Hotline staff are workers with special training in determining what constitutes child abuse and neglect under Illinois law. Details are important. Ideally, you should be able to tell the hotline worker:

- The child's name, address and age.
- The nature of the suspected abuse or neglect, including when and where it occurred.
- The names of suspected perpetrators, if known, and their relationship to the child (parent, teacher, etc.).
- Any other information you think may help.

What happens when I call the hotline?

When you call, a hotline worker will listen to what you wish to report. The worker will then ask questions to help gather enough information to determine whether to take a formal report. If there is not enough information to make a report, the worker will tell you so and answer any questions you may have.

If a formal report is taken, an Investigation Specialist will begin the investigation within 24 hours–much sooner if the child is considered in immediate risk of harm.



How am I protected?

People who report alleged child abuse or neglect in good faith cannot be held liable for damages under criminal or civil law. In addition, their names are not given to the person they name as the abuser or to anyone else unless ordered by a hearing officer or judge. Members of the general public may make reports to the hotline without giving their names.

Should I call the police?

Always call the child abuse hotline to report suspected child abuse or neglect. However, you should also consider calling the police–especially in emergencies, when the child has been injured, or when the child is in immediate danger of being harmed.

How else can I help?

The Illinois income tax check-off program enables anyone to donate to the Child Abuse Prevention Fund when they file their state income tax returns. The money is used to support community-based family education programs designed to help parents improve their parenting skills and to help them learn how to cope with family life.

You can also be an important part of improving foster care in your community. There are many ways you can make a difference, including becoming a foster parent, mentoring a foster child, volunteering at your local foster care agency, and helping to change the way people think about foster care. For more information, call 888-4 R KIDS 2 (toll free) or visit www.fosterkidsareourkids.org.

For Mandated Reporters ONLY

Who are mandated reporters?

Members of the general public are encouraged to report suspected child abuse and neglect. However, state law mandates that workers in certain professions must make reports if they have reasonable cause to suspect abuse or neglect. Mandated reporters include:

- **Medical Personnel:** Physicians, psychiatrists, surgeons, residents, interns, dentists, dentist hygienists, medical examiners, pathologists, osteopaths, coroners, Christian Science practitioners, chiropractors, podiatrists, registered and licensed practical nurses, emergency medical technicians, substance abuse treatment personnel, hospital administrators and other personnel involved in the examination, care or treatment of patients.
- **School and Child Care Personnel:** Teachers, administrators, certified and non-certified school employees, school board members, educational advocates assigned to a child pursuant to the School Code, truant officers, directors and staff assistants of day care centers and nursery schools, and child care workers.
- **Law Enforcement:** Truant officers, probation officers, law enforcement officers, and field personnel of the Department of Corrections.
- **State Agencies:** Field personnel from the Departments of Children and Family Services, Department of Public Health, Department of Corrections, Department of Human Rights, Department of Healthcare

and Family Services, and Department of Human Services. Supervisors and administrators of general assistance under the Illinois Public Aid Code are also included.

- **Others:** Social workers, counselors, social service administrators, substance abuse treatment personnel, domestic violence program personnel, crisis line or hotline personnel, foster parents, homemakers, recreational program or facility person-nel, registered psychologists and assist-ants working under the direct supervision of a psychologist, funeral home directors and employees, and members of the clergy.

Mandated reporters who make good faith reports have the same immunity from liability under the law as non-mandated reporters. **However, a mandated reporter's willful failure to report suspected instances of child abuse or neglect to DCFS constitutes a Class A misdemeanor.** A second or subsequent violation is a Class 4 felony.

Does reporting my suspicions to a superior satisfy my mandated reporter requirement?

No. While you may also inform your superiors (such as the school principal or an administrator) of your suspicions, this does not satisfy your mandated reporter requirement that you call the hotline.

Am I still a mandated reporter if someone who is now over 18 years old tells me he or she was abused as a child?

If the person reporting the abuse has reason to believe that the alleged perpetrator has had, or currently has, access to children under 18, you

should call the hotline. In cases where the alleged perpetrator does not have access to children, contact your local law enforcement agency.

How should mandated reporters make reports?

Call the child abuse hotline as soon as possible. You must also send written confirmation to the appropriate DCFS field office within 48 hours. The Department will provide a form to use when sending this confirmation. If you suspect a child's death may have been caused by abuse or neglect, you must also call your county's coroner or medical examiner.

NOTICE

Any person who knowingly transmits a false report to the Department commits the offense of disorderly conduct under subsection (a)(7) of Section 26-1 of the Criminal Code of 1961. A first violation of this subsection is a Class B misdemeanor, punishable by a term of imprisonment for up to one year, or by a fine not to exceed $500, or by both such term and fine. A second or subsequent violation is a Class 4 felony.

How can I learn more?

The DCFS publication *A Manual for Mandated Reporters* is available in English and Spanish, and can be downloaded from the Department's web site (www.state.il.us/dcfs) or ordered by calling the Division of Communications at 217-785-1700. Additional training opportunities will also be advertised on the DCFS web site.

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